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SUBJECT: AFRICAN UNION CONFERENCE RATIFIES MARTIME CHARTER

This cable is part of a series of reporting on regional transport infrastructure developments in Southern Africa.

¶1. (SBU) Summary. South Africa hosted a week-long African Union (AU) Conference for Ministers responsible for maritime transport in Durban during the week of October 12. The AU Maritime Charter was initially developed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1993, and was adopted by 36 AU member states at the Durban AU Conference. The goals of the charter include "creating a safe, secure, and clean maritime transport industry." The South African Department of Transport announced new maritime security initiatives to support the AU conference, and unveiled public transport projects to improve infrastructure and service delivery during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Continued growth of the African maritime sector will require government and private-sector efforts to address piracy threats. Economic Assistant attended the AU conference gala dinner hosted by South African Minister of Transport S'bu Ndebele. End Summary.

AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPS
MARITIME CHARTER IN 1993

¶2. (SBU) An African Charter on Maritime Transport, the Addis Ababa Declaration and Plan of Action, was originally developed at a conference of African Transport Ministers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1993. This charter provided a framework for cooperation among member governments of the African Union, and between African and non-African countries. The first follow up AU conference was held in Abuja, Nigeria and reviewed the implementation process for the Maritime Charter. The main objective of the second AU conference in Durban was to complete the ratification process for the Addis Ababa Declaration.

PROGRESS MADE ON MARITIME
CHARTER IN DURBAN

¶3. (SBU) The African Union achieved consensus on the Maritime Charter on October 16, during the conference in Durban. The charter was adopted by 36 member states with the goals of "creating a safe, secure, and clean maritime transport industry." Also present during the deliberations were representatives of other African regional economic communities, the European Union and other international organizations. According to Ndebele, the charter maps a solid and defined place for the maritime sector in Africa and will help propel Africa towards its rightful place in the world economy."

¶4. (SBU) A customs representative from the South African Revenue Service told Transport Officer that the major challenges that emerged during the ministerial debates and charter adoption process centered on linguistic barriers, not policy differences. Inaccuracies in the Arabic and French translations often led to lengthy deliberations. The representative also noted that progress was made to promote women in the African maritime sector. Plans are underway to create an umbrella organization to promote women within

the maritime sector and a conference is being planned for Durban in 2010.

CHARTER FOCUSES ON BUILDING
AFRICAN SHIPPING INDUSTRY

¶15. (SBU) The overall aim of the charter is to implement harmonized Africa-wide transport policies to promote sustained growth and development of shipping generally and African merchant fleets in particular. Some of the practical objectives of the charter include the promotion of cooperation among the maritime administrators of member states through new regional entities, which could ultimately lead to improved standards on the coast, in ports, and on the continent's inland waterways.

¶16. (SBU) The maritime charter also aims to promote the development and use of African national and regional shipping lines and provide legislative protection for African operators through cabotage laws. (Note: Politically, cabotage regulations restrict trade to domestic or regional operators and are a form of protectionism. Justifications for cabotage regulations include national security and the need to regulate public safety. End Note.) The charter also encourages the establishment of shippers' councils to represent the interest of cargo owners.

¶17. (SBU) The charter recommends the establishment of an integrated coast guard network for Africa (split into three separate regions) to enforce these steps. A strong emphasis will also be placed on the provision and strengthening of facilities for increased maritime training. This included the need for strengthened state-run port

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organizations, increasing the number of trained surveyors, and the creation of a dedicated maritime university.

GREATER RESPONSE REQUIRED
FOR PIRACY THREAT

¶18. (SBU) Ndebele and other speakers highlighted areas of strong concern for the maritime sector, including piracy in the Gulf of Aden, as well as international dumping of toxic waste in African waters and near African ports. Interpol Executive Director Jean-Michel Louboutin explained that pirates operating off the Somali coast were under the control of crime syndicates, and that foreign criminals have become involved because of the attraction of multi-million dollar ransoms. Louboutin said piracy could now be classified as organized crime with policing, social, and economic dimensions, but the international naval patrolling capacity in the area is not enough to solve the problem.

¶19. (SBU) Ndebele said an adequate response to the current piracy threat would require the creation of a combined international force with support from all nations, but he did not provide specific details about the envisioned force. According to press reports, most African governments (with the exceptions of Kenya and the Seychelles who are directly affected) have adopted a hands-off approach to piracy, leaving the problem to other international forces and the respective shipping lines to resolve.

SOUTH AFRICA TO PLAY REGIONAL
MARITIME LEADERSHIP ROLE

¶10. (SBU) The SAG has decided to expand its national maritime data collection system to include an Africa Cooperative Data Center to support the implementation of the AU Maritime Charter and to improve national transport systems for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. As a part of October's National Transport Month, Ndebele announced improvements to the South African Center for Sea Watch and Response (CSWR) and conducted maritime and aviation table-top rescue

exercises at the end of October. CSWR has the capacity to identify and track vessels up to 1,000 miles away from its coastline, as well as SA-flagged vessels anywhere in the world. This data, automatically transmitted every six hours, can also be displayed on an electronic chart which is accessible via a secured website. Once a vessel is identified, full details of the vessel can be accessed via a ship's database.

¶11. (SBU) The CSWR has access to the Automatic Identification System (AIS) data of ships on the coast in the areas around the major ports of South Africa which means a vessel's every move can be tracked. According to officials, this system will be enhanced to ensure direct contact with the vessel to improve the CSWR's response time to maritime incidents. A Satellite AIS is also being developed to receive signals from vessels anywhere on earth and then transmit data back to a ground station. Ndebele emphasized that this capability can be another resource that can be used for the benefit of all African countries.

¶12. (SBU) The International Maritime Organization (IMO) reports that globally there is a chronic shortage of 34,000 seafarer (marine) officers and 200,000 non-officers. According to Ndebele, South Africa plans to train 1,200 officers a year and about 7,000 non-officers. South Africa is also planning to form at least one dedicated maritime university in one of the coastal provinces.

COMMENT

¶13. (SBU) The African Union reached agreement on the overall framework of a Maritime Charter originally developed in 1993, but still needs to develop the specific plans for implementation of these broad goals. The ministers met at a time of heightened awareness regarding maritime security. The threat of piracy on the Gulf of Aden has affected commercial operations in ports on the Eastern coast of the continent. Continued growth of the African maritime sector will require addressing this security threat. Thus far, most efforts have been ad hoc or at the expense of the private shipping lines. African governments will have to make more concerted efforts to contain the piracy threat if they hope to increase growth in the maritime sector. End Comment.

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